# Blue-Ribbon Panel Begins Process Of Closing Up Shop

**COCHAIRMEN:** Joshua Lederberg, left, and William T. Golden have served at the helm of the Carnegie Commission from the panel's inception in 1988.

BY BARBARA SPECTOR

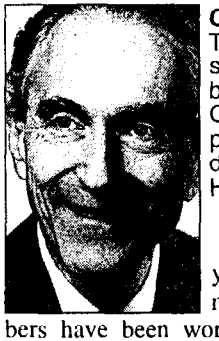
At an April 1 meeting in Washington, D.C., the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government formally began the process of going out of business. The commission's five-year charter ends June 30.

The panel was convened in 1988 under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York to assess the ways in which policymakers take science and technology issues into account when making decisions. The blue-ribbon panel is cochaired by Nobel laureate Joshua Lederberg, former president of Rockefeller University, and William T. Golden, chairman of the board of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, who formerly served as a special consultant on scientific activities to President Harry Truman.

Included among the members of the commission and its advisory council are some of the United States' most prominent scientists, as well as two former U.S. presidents (Democrat Jimmy Carter and Republican Gerald Ford); three former U.S. senators (Republicans Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. of Maryland and Daniel Evans of Washington, as well as Democrat Lawton Chiles of Florida); three former U.S. representatives (Democrats John Brademas of Indiana and Paul Rogers of Florida, as well as Mathias, who served in the House before being elected senator); and three current or former governors (Democrat Richard Celeste of Ohio, as well as Chiles, now Florida's chief executive, and Evans, who was Washington's governor from 1964 to 1977).

### Winding Down

Commission staff, as well as the commissioners themselves, say the five-year limit on the panel's lifespan is a positive thing. "The types of studies the commission did could continue to be done by others, or the commission could go on," says Mark Schaefer, senior staff associate and director of the commission's Washington, D.C., office. "But it's a good idea to have a defined lifetime and then go on and do other things. I think it keeps people fresh."



**CREATOR:** The commission is the brainchild of Carnegie Corporation president David A. Hamburg.

In the five years that commission members have been working together, Lederberg says, "we all got to know each other, and personal axes to grind were all worn down. In that way, it's a shame to disband, but I think we all agree it's time. I don't think the world needs a permanent watchdog."

### Vital Statistics

The panel's 15 committees and task forces, involving the efforts of more than 150 high-power volunteers, have made about 400 recommendations. While commissioners acknowledge that some of these suggestions are more likely than others to be put into practice, they note that several have already been implemented (for example, the recommendation that the president move quickly to appoint a science adviser—as President Clinton did when he named John Gibbons to the post in December). Yet, as Golden notes, "One can never be sure of paternity; we weren't the only ones urging such action."

In addition to its eminent volunteers, the commission has eight professional full-time-equivalent staffers scattered among its three offices—two in New York and one in Washington. When the commission's charter ends, some $12 million to $15 million will have been spent on continued production and dissemination of its 18 reports. In addition, the commission has contributed to a half-dozen other publications, as well as several dozen background or working papers.

The commission is known jokingly among its members as the "Commission on Everything" because of the wide range of topics it

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# Carnegie Commission Activity Winds Down

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has addressed, according to one source who requests anonymity. It has issued reports on science and technology as they relate to societal goals; international affairs; and the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, among other subjects.

**Bidding Adieu**

The April 1 event was the final formal activity of the full commission. After a closed session in which the panel was scheduled to approve one of its last task force reports—"Science, Technology, and Congress: Organizational and Procedural Reforms"—it hosted a meeting and reception for about 300 members of the U.S. scientific community as well as members of government and the media. Gibbons was among the invited speakers slated to address the group. At press time, the meeting had not yet taken place.

The open meeting marked the release of a report noting the highlights of the commission's tenure, "Science, Technology and Government for a Changing World." Also planned is a book-length summary document on the work of the commission, now being written by Lederberg and Jesse Ausubel, the commission's director of studies. The volume is scheduled for publication in the winter of 1993-94.

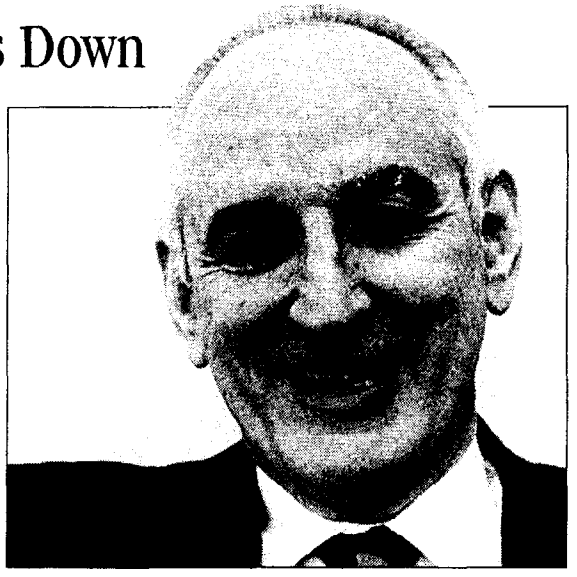
The purpose of the meeting, says Golden, was "to review what we have done and plot for the future—to devise ways to stimulate continued attention to the issues to which we have paid attention."

David Z. Robinson, the commission's executive director, adds that another goal of the meeting was to thank the invited guests—many of whom had been sought out by the commission for advice—for their help and to get their reaction to the panel's five-year-long work. "If they agree with the conclusions [of the reports]," Robinson says, "we want them to have 'ownership' of them, and use the fact that the commission has recommended them to push them."

**Commission staffer Maxine Rockoff: "There will be continued growth and flowering of seeds that the commission planted, even though there won't be a central staff."**

**The Next Stage**

"There will be an enormous letdown after [the commission disbands]," acknowledges Maxine L. Rockoff, senior administrator of the commission. "But there will also be a lot that gets launched." The chairpersons of the commission's various task forces, she says, "are committed to the ideas" set forth in the reports. "There will be continued growth and flowering of seeds that the commission planted, even though there won't be a central staff," she predicts.



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** David Z. Robinson will return to the Carnegie Corporation once the commission closes down.

Golden says he hopes that some of the responsibility for seeing that the recommendations get carried out will be shouldered by "other organizations that will continue more or less in perpetuity," such as the national academies of science and engineering, scientific societies, and academic entities like Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. "We hope they will use our reports and create their own."

As others take over, he adds, "there'll be mutations to our recommendations—and there ought to be as the years go on. Our recommendations won't last in perpetuity, but will mutate in a Darwinian way."

The Carnegie Corporation will support the distribution of the commission's reports to anyone who requests them for the next year or two, corporation staffers say. Robinson, a research physicist who was executive vice president and treasurer of the Carnegie Corporation before joining the commission staff, will return to the corporation and will work there on implementation of the commission's findings.

In addition, says the commission's creator, Carnegie Corporation president David A. Hamburg, "there are some grants that [the corporation] may make over the next three years to follow up in spirit." For example, he says, funds might be disbursed to university-based groups or scientific organizations that want to pursue the commission's ideas.

**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER:** Rodney W. Nichols, CEO of the New York Academy of Sciences, says he will be tracking the commission's recommendations.

An important component of the follow-up process will be the efforts of the commission members themselves, commission officials say. "All of us who have been connected will be promoting these gospels as best we can as a sideline to our other activities by seizing every opportunity to bring these issues up," says Golden. Another way for commission members to keep the recommendations in the public consciousness, says Robinson, is by writing opinion pieces in journals and newspapers.

The level of interest in continuing the panel's activities will vary according to the commitment of the individual commission members, Golden acknowledges: "Some will be more interested than others; that's the way of the world. All of these things have a half-life, it's true. The next few years will be very important—attention will taper off unless we keep the attention level up."

Rodney W. Nichols, chief executive officer of the New York Academy of Sciences and a member of the commission's advisory council, says he believes that "people who work very hard on something on a pro-bono basis" will keep to their commitment after the commission has shut down. "Those of us involved will keep tracking [the recommendations] through networking and meetings," he says. "Would I be doing the same things if the commission had never existed? The answer is probably yes."

Robinson notes, however, that "the value of reports goes down over time." As the years go by, he says, it is possible that "the recommendations [will be] all in place or all rejected"—or that changing times have rendered some of the items moot.

"These things [recommendations] ought to be airborne," says Golden. "They'll go on their way, and in the next couple of years there'll be a need for another Carnegie Commission." ❑